



WOZA MOYA

WOMEN OF ZIMBABWE ARISE (WOZA)

WOZA means 'Come forward'.

By women for women and with women, across race, colour, creed, class or political persuasion. Empowering women to be courageous, caring, committed and in communication with their communities.



6th May 2016

Honourable Minister of Primary and Secondary Education 'Lazarus Dokora'

Women of Zimbabwe Arise (WOZA) on behalf of members, adults and children, and with due respect for the constitutional rights of children. We write with regard to the introduction and launch of the 'National Pledge' at Primary and Secondary schools. As a Civil Society organisation, our members the majority of whom are mainly women have studied the 'national pledge' and found that the pledge is a violation of children's rights in the constitution. It violates our Zimbabwe constitution on the following areas:

"Chapter 2 section 19 subsection 3 (b) which states that the state must take appropriate legislative and other measures to ensure that **children** are not required or permitted to perform work or provide services that are inappropriate for children's age; or place at risk the children's wellbeing, education, physical or mental health or spiritual, moral or social development"

WOZA is grounded on Christian values but members fully respect all Zimbabweans' constitutional right to practice any religion of their choice. WOZA submit to you that the pledge and the manner in which it was introduced and is being implemented in schools violates our "**Freedom of Conscience**". Chapter 4 section 60 (2) states that "No person may be compelled to make an oath that is contrary to their religion or belief...."

WOZA as an organisation and our members as parents aim "To promote the protection and participation of children and ensure the enjoyment of their rights in Zimbabwe"

WOZA members therefore object in the strongest terms the Ministries pledge programme which will turn our children into future 'puppet citizens' brainwashed to believe that they do not have the freedom of choice, the freedom to make decisions and work in freely chosen environment. These concerns amongst others have been raised by our members who are 'citizens' who were duly consulted in the last weeks in communities around Bulawayo. In just these few weeks WOZA has consulted more ordinary citizens than the ministry did prior to formulating the pledge.

We object to the wording of the 'national pledge' or the following reasons:

1. The pledge is an oath by children that they will work for their country and not leave Zimbabwe despite the economic hardships. Yet we still await the 2 million jobs promised to the citizens of this nation.

2. Children being transformed to future militias by being forced to salute the national flag, why could you not have rather asked them to “raise high our national flag” that this militaristic language?
3. The pledge falsely says that children are beneficiaries of Zimbabwe natural resources – yet these continue to be looted and remain unaccounted for, not forgetting the missing USD \$15 billion from our diamond fields.
4. The pledge is a deliberate measure to divert ‘our’ attention from more important issues such as “**the right to free basic primary Education**” recognised in the Constitution of Zimbabwe. The pledge also is a distraction measure from the economic chaos that prevails and the sticky plaster programme of bond notes when the ‘economy’ is dying in intensive care.
5. The pledge is insensitive to the victims of Gukurahundi in Midlands and Matabeleland as it is asking our children to “**Respecting the brave fathers and mother who lost lives in the Chimurenga/Umvukela**” but says nothing about the atrocities of the Gukurahundi perpetrated by liberators in an independent Zimbabwe.
6. By the sequencing of the pledge after the Lord’s prayer bring it to the level of worship forcing children to make an oath against ‘Christians’ religious beliefs’. It is also UNCONSTITUTIONAL to force an opinion, religion and bigotry belief on children and force the arm of parents to buy gifts to support their children being abused in this way. The assembly where the pledge is to be recited cannot be compulsory to all children.

For these reasons mentioned above; WOZA is urging you “the government” to reconsider the content of the pledge and consult the citizens of this land before decision impacting on the wellbeing and development of our children are made.

We therefore demand the respect of the Constitution by government officials, parents and children!! We will continue to denounce this pledge and demand for more democratic processes to be upheld.

We appeal to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education and Government to withdraw the continued implementation of the pledge!

We appeal to the Ministry of Primary and Secondary Education to use what energy they have to rather roll out free primary education promised during the liberation war and in the Constitution.

Standing up for the rights of Children – WOZA and members represented by the following leaders

JL. Williams

Magodonga Mahlangu
